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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Bush to Mongolia Israel-  
Political Change Iran U.S.- France: Social Models  
PARIS - Tuesday, November 22, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Bush to Mongolia  
Israel- Political Change  
Iran  
U.S.- France: Social Models

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Today's national rail strike is the lead front page and editorial story. Commentators agree that the cause behind the strike is "fear of privatization." But they also note that the government's assurance that "privatization is not in the works" does not help the rail company's development. A strike by the Paris metro system has been announced for tomorrow.

International stories include Ariel Sharon's break with the Likud, the reprieve Iran is getting from the West, and President Bush's visit to Mongolia, "his ally." (See Part C) The Mehlis report due on December 15 leads Le Figaro to write: "The Syrian President on November 10 made clear that he would not bend and that Syria is clearly being targeted. Observers note he has two options: a compromise with the U.S. about Iraq or confrontation."

Angela Merkel's first day in office is extensively covered. She is expected to meet with President Chirac tomorrow. La Croix believes "Merkel is planning more drastic reforms for Germany than France's." Alain Franco in La Croix comments: "Merkel is somewhat of a mystery, but she is not a source of concern. She has reassured her European entourage by adopting a stance that favors the stability pact and respects the commitment made to Turkey."

Macedonia's FM Ilinka Mitreva who is interviewed in Le Figaro, adamantly defends the notion that Macedonia belongs in the EU, "geographically, historically and culturally."

Financial La Tribune interviews WTO's Peter Mandelson: "I will not make new proposals on agriculture. The stalemate is not due to agricultural issues, but to the fact that the market is not sufficiently open in the service sector. Those who cast doubt on the sincerity of the American proposals do so because the Americans have not offered to cut their agricultural spending, only to lower the ceiling of expenditures."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Bush to Mongolia

"Bush Visits His Ally: Mongolia"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/22): "The more surreal aspect of President Bush's visit to Mongolia is probably the fact that this was the easiest portion of his Asian trip. President Bush is never complacent with dictatorships; he is often contested by 'older' democracies. But when it comes to new democracies Bush is at his best. Especially when they send their soldiers to fight alongside the GIs. For Washington, Mongolia is an important steppingstone in the region. On the aftermath of a Chinese visit that was marked by tension, the White House is back to its regional strategy game of Monopoly. But with Congress and the Pentagon concerned about China's new rise in power, Beijing would have to be blind not to see America's containment maneuvering to secure strategic alliances in Central Asia. Washington has more than one weapon available: the other is economic. What remains to be seen is whether Washington will opt for dtente or is preparing for a cold war."

Israel- Political Change

"Sharon Wants a Political 'Big Bang'"

Jean-Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (11/22): "The Lion, at seventy-seven, is still roaring. This strategist, who has imposed new rules in the game with the Palestinians, and

given himself new margins of maneuver with the Israelis, could well succeed in a partial pullout in the West Bank while safeguarding the essential part of the settlements."

"Sharon Opts For a Break"

Patrick Saint-Paul in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/22):

"Sharon's wager is risky. Bearing the fruits of a successful pullout from Gaza, all polls signaled him as a winner. But the surprise win of the Labor party's Amir Peretz has changed the game. Without a coalition government, Sharon must change course. With his centrist approach he wants to offer a more liberal economic policy and work in 'favor of peace' with the Palestinians."

Iran

Renaud Girard in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/22):

"Washington wants to give Putin enough time to convince Iran to accept a compromise. An agreement between the White House and Moscow was apparently reached in Pusan. But this is Washington's last chance offer to Tehran."

"Barbs and Traps in Tehran"

Marie-Claude Decamps in left-of-center Le Monde (11/22): "In short, whatever the new Iranian President does or says is a source of contention and mistrust inside Iran. So much so that the Ayatollah Khomeini was forced to intervene recently in favor of his protg asking the Iranians 'to give the government time and to stop the criticism.' A subtle sign according to some that the problems caused by Ahmadinejad are a source of dissent not only among the conservatives but also a source of annoyance for the spiritual leader, taken by surprise by Ahmadinejad's initiatives."

U.S.- France: Social Models

"The Image of the U.S. in France."

Alfred Grosser in Catholic La Croix (11/22): "In France we willingly talk about Europe and European values, opposing them to the U.S. We forget that they come from the Declaration of Independence. It is true that George Bush and his administration violate many principles. One among them is more

European than American: lying as political sin. President Bush has indeed led his country in a war based on lies. Detainees are held without trials. Torture is used either directly or by proxy. But where in France are the Foreign Ministers whose faces are the color of a Colin Powell or a Condoleezza Rice? How much do our newly arrived migrants from North Africa weigh in on our politics compared with the Hispanic Americans of California? Oil may corrupt, but what about our robbing Africa's wealth? The U.S. media at times does beat its own 'mea culpa,' but never France's. The negative similarities between France and the U.S. are at times glaring: contempt for minorities, an arrogant press. Yes, America is hypocritical when it preaches what it does not practice. But does France have the right to proclaim itself as a model of virtue in the face of its supposed American fiend?"

"Virtuous Examples"

Yves de Kerdrel in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/22): "In the U.S. there are multiple examples of 'black power' in its capitalistic society. Many other minorities are also rising. In this regard, France is far behind. It is undeniable that the American cocktail of affirmative action, policies of quotas and selective immigration presents more advantages than disadvantages. Diversity creates wealth." STAPLETON